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Ransom Stone and Family

by Steven Knapp

Summer, 1978

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Sacred

To the memory of

Ransom Stone

A Virginian by birth,

And for 30 years, a citizen of

Savannah, Who died with

a cancer in the face.

April 21st 1814

Aged 47 years and 5 months

Praises on tombs are tilles vainly spent

A mans good name is his best monument.

(Early Epitaphs in Georgia)

Researching individuals of the past is an interesting and sometimes difficult adventure. The paths of inquiry are often many, and divergent in nature, at times calling for the sixth sense of a Sherlockian sleuth. Unfortunately, unlike Sherlock, there are some clues too deep to fathom. In the course of my investigation I have come to know the Stone family, probably much more intimately than I can relate to those who will read this work. These persons have become more than a newspaper clipping or a name in a deed book. Therefore I shall attempt to tell you enough of Ransom, Sarah, Sarah Ann, William, Francis and others in such a way as to make them more than just names on a page.

Ransom¹ Stone was born sometime during the month of December, 1767 in the region of Virginia.² It is fascinating to realize that he lived during the ouster of British rule and witnessed the birth of a new nation. He was quite young when he arrived in Savannah, being between the ages of fourteen and eighteen.³ In the interim between his arrival and 1794⁴ nothing is heard of Ransom. Although we may assume that it is during this time that he marries and establishes himself in the baking profession.⁵ It is during this same period that our esteemed baker begins to have financial problems.⁶ One can almost visualize him sitting at the local tavern, discussing the economic ills of the baking business. Ransom's financial troubles must have been very great at this time, for it is during this time frame that Lot number 12 on Columbia Ward was auctioned off at a Sheriff's Sale.⁷ He had been paying ground rent on this property since 1799.⁸

The property was purchased by David Davis Williams in 1807,⁸ who I believe was a regular acquaintance of Ransoms, and subsequently by his mother-in-law Mary Jackson later in that same year.⁹ Mrs. Jackson upon purchasing the land gave it to her daughter Sarah, to hold for her grandsons, William and Francis M., until their 21st birthday.¹⁰ It seems that Ransom's mother-in-law did not want him to own the property. There is a similar occurrence which took place about this time. Ransom sold a young negroe slavegirl to one Jane Winn on November 23rd, 1807 for \$130.00.¹¹ On December 18 of that same year Jane Winn gave the slavegirl to Ransom's daughter, Sarah Ann Stone, with the stipulation that the slave would remain Sarah's property alone.¹² From this sort of action we may assume that not all of the Stones financial difficulties were caused by external sources. Before ending our discussion of Ransom Stone we will mention that the house he built between 1799 and 1809¹³ is still standing. During the next several years we hear only once more of Ransom before his death. Staying true to form he misses Jury duty for January 1811 and is fined ten dollars.¹⁴ His death occurred on September 20, 1814 at his home in Columbia Ward.¹⁵ He had the misfortune of dying of a cancer in the face after being confined to his house for two months. His wife, one daughter and three sons survived him.¹⁶ A morbid note of humor is evident in that he paid taxes for 1816 and 1817.¹⁷

One of the unfortunate aspects of this type of research is the scarcity and sometimes total absence of concrete material from which to work. Because of such a lack, portions of the following are the product carefully weighted speculation.

Sarah Jackson was undoubtedly the wife of Ransom Stone¹⁸ and the mother of his children. She probably came from Liberty County, Georgia, which was the area of residence for her mother.¹⁹ The time frame in which her marriage would have occurred pre-dates the records kept by the Court of Ordinary of Chatham County. Therefore it is fair to assume that the marriage was not recorded, took place in another state, or exists in material overlooked by my research, which needless to say is very possible. When Sarah married Ransom she was six years his senior, which was not an unusual practice at this time. Their union produced three sons and one daughter,²⁰ while at the same time proving most profitable for Ransom. She died on October 10, 1821 at the age of 61 from an ailment described as a liver complaint.²¹ Now is the time to turn our thoughts toward the children of Ransom and Mary Stone.

Among the male children there is one who raises more questions than he provides answers. Of him I can say very little, having been unable to discern his name, time or place of birth, or the cause for his death. He may have died while quite young or perhaps been the black sheep of the family.²² At the moment he is only a large question mark seeking some answers.

Ransom's only daughter was named Sarah Ann after her mother. She was born at the turn of the nineteenth century, between 1802 and 1803.²³ Sarah Ann's life was short therefore the amount of information about it is small. Also women of this time were more to be seen than heard, especially young girls. Although through her we learn there is a connection between the Stone and Winn families.²⁴ Which may prove help-

ful to some future investigator. Her life came to a close on May 23rd, 1821 at the age of nineteen. The presiding physican, one Dr. Waring, attributed her death to the all encompassing term of decline.²⁵

William Stone is also a difficult subject to inquire into. Mainly because several William Stones are listed in the Georgia Census from 1820 on. It is my speculation that William sold the northern half of Lot number 12 in Columbia Ward on June 17, 1825.²⁶ The land was purchased by his brother Francis, along with a lot in Walton County.²⁷ Thereupon William and his wife Elizabeth left the state around 1828.²⁸ I believe that William went to Kings County in Brooklyn, New York. perhaps seeking a healthier economic situation.

Now we come to the most notable of Ransom's children. Searching the deeds and newspapers one runs across numerous entries concerning him. Francis M. Stone was born in November 1789.²⁹ In his adult life he was a man of some means, engaging in many business transactions and acquiring notable assets. He served as City Marshall and was one of the original trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church built in Savannah in 1848.³⁰ Francis M. married Mary Ann Reed during 1817³¹ and she remained his wife for the whole of his long life. The Stones seemed to be childless for most of their marriage. Until Mary gave birth in 1853³³ after 26 years of marriage. They named their son George Walter Stone, unfortunately in he died in 1856. The Stones also had an adopted son Francis R. who proved to be their only child. Francis M. passed away on February 4, 1864 at the stately age of 74 years.³⁴ Mary Ann soon followed her husband in April of 1865 being 85 years old. Francis M. left

his estate in the hands of his wife and adopted son. With the death of his mother Francis R. became the sole executor of his fathers estate. But this was the period of Reconstruction in the South and the economy was suffering terribly as can be seen in a letter from Francis R. to Court of Ordinary in 1866.

Sir:

I have the honour of addressing you these few lines asking for commissions on the Est. of my father, Mr. F. M. Stone-I recd. and paid out up to the time of Gen. Sherman's entrance into this city the amount of Six-thousand Dollars-making a total of recd. and paid out twelve thousand Dollars, I therefore beg that your Honors allow me commissions on the said twelve thousand Dollars, being-Three hundred Dollars, in Confederate Money, which brought down to the salvation to the present currency would equal Thirty Dollars.

- ¹In the course of research I have found the spelling of the subjects name to vary. i.e. Ransom, Randson, Ransome
- ²Mrs. peter W. Meldrin, Early Epitaphs in Georgia, p. 317.
C. P. Wilson, Annuls of Georgia, III, p. 172.
- ³~~I~~bid, p. 317.
- ⁴Georgia Gazette, 1794, 12/4, p.2,c.3.
- ⁵Chatham County Court House, Superior Court, Deeds: Book 1-R
p. 82-84.
Columbian Museum and Savannah Advertiser, 1800, 8/1, p.3,c.4.
- ⁶Georgia Gazette, 1794, 12/4, p.2, c.3: 1798, 1/26, p.2,c.2:
The Republican and Savannah Evening Ledger, 1807, 8/6, p.4,
c.1; Columbian Museum and Savannah Advertiser, 1798, 2/27,
p.2,c.2.
- ⁷The Republican and Savannah Evening Ledger, 1807, 8/6, p.4,c.1.
- ⁸Savannah-Chatham Tax Digest 1799-1805.
Deeds, op. cit., Book 2-A, p.497.
- ⁹Deeds, op. cit., Book 2-B, p.61.
- ¹⁰Deeds; op. cit., Book 2-C, p.458.
- ¹¹Deeds, op. cit., Book 2-B, 1808 year
- ¹²Deeds, op. cit., Book 2-E, p.552.
- ¹³This assumption is drawn by noting the increase in property
taxs recorded for those years.
- ¹⁴Columbian Museum and Savannah Advertiser, 1811, 1/31, p.2,c.1.
- ¹⁵~~I~~bid, 1811, 1/31, p.2,c.1.
- ¹⁶Chatham County Health Department-Vital Records, 1806-1832.
- ¹⁷Tax Digest, op. cit., 1816-17.
- ¹⁸Deeds, op. cit., Book 2-C, p.458.
Deeds, op. cit., Book 2-C, p.457.
- ¹⁹~~I~~bid, 2-C, p.458.
- ²⁰Vital Records, op. cit., 1806-32.
- ²¹~~I~~bid, 1806-32.

²²The possibility exists that the three male children sighted in Wilsons is a typographical error.

²³Vital Records, op, cit., 1806-32.

²⁴Deeds, op. cit., Book 2-E, p.552.

²⁵Vital Records, op. cit., 1806-32.

²⁶Savannah Republican, 1825, 6/17, p.3, c.5.

²⁷Deeds, op, cit., Book 2-S, p.33.

²⁸Ibid, Book 2-S, p.33.

²⁹Laurel Grove Cemetery, Savannah, Georgia. General Index to Keepers Record Books, 1852-1938.

³⁰E. J. Purse, Names of the members to the Methodist Episcopal Church in Georgia.

³¹Marriage records abstracts, Chatham County, Georgia 1805-66.

³²Chatham County Court House, Court of Ordinary- Will number 346, F. M. Stone 1864.

³³Laurel Grove Cemetery, Lot 233, Headstone.

³⁴Laurel Grove Cemetery, op. cit., Record Book 1852-1938.

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